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SUSPENSE		15 Oct 1986			

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September 26, 1986

Honorable William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Casey:

The publication of The Target is Destroyed by Seymour Hersh has caused a flood of questions to the Committee regarding the shootdown of KAL 007 on August 31, 1983. A major premise of the Hersh book is that the United States contended at the time of the shootdown that the Soviets knew they were firing at a civilian airliner, but that the actual intelligence did not justify this contention.

The essence of the Administration's initial position, as I understand it, was stated by Secretary Shultz at a news conference on September 1, 1983 when he said, "... We can see no excuse whatsoever for this appalling act." Later in the conference, the Secretary answered a question, saying, "... The aircraft that shot the commercial airliner down moved itself into a position with the aircraft so that with the eye you could inspect the aircraft and see what you're looking at."

A New York Times article of September 5 stated that Administration officials acknowledged that the Soviets may have initially confused the Korean 747 with an RC-135. The article claimed that "The Administration continued to maintain that there was no way the Russians could have mistaken the identity of the plane at the time they shot it down." The White House Press Office repeatedly said that there was "irrefutable" intelligence showing that the Soviets had visually identified Flight 007 as a civilian airliner before destroying it. Three weeks later, on September 29, a Washington Times article stated, "The Soviet pilot who shot down Korean Air Lines Flight 007 on September 1 told his military commanders upon being debriefed that he knew the airplane was a civilian aircraft, according to U.S. intelligence and military sources."

My impression, then, is that the Administration's position was at the time immediately following the incident that the Soviets knowingly shot down a civilian airliner for intruding into their airspace. I am not aware of any change in the Administration's position thereafter.

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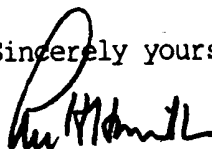
I would like to understand the following:

1. Am I correct in my understanding of the Administration's position? What was the intelligence available at the time that was relied upon for the Administration's statements?
2. Did the intelligence estimates subsequently change?
3. If they did change, why did the Administration not correct its previous statements?
4. Does the Intelligence Community now believe that the Soviets were confused as to the correct identification of their target?

I would appreciate your views on this matter.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee H. Hamilton', written in a cursive style.

Lee H. Hamilton
Chairman